

# Casting light on claims of abuse

Sun 7-8-13

Cleric who worked at Rosemead orphanage is among many whose files will be released by Catholic orders.

BY VICTORIA KIM  
AND HARRIET RYAN

The preschooler's hair was falling out in clumps. He had stopped playing with other children and barely spoke to his teachers. He woke screaming each night, and during the day clung to his mother.

What's wrong, she asked again and again. Finally, he told her: His big brother, adopted seven years earlier from the Maryvale Catholic orphanage in Rosemead, was molesting him. Devastated, she rushed the older boy to a therapist's office, where he offered a harrowing explanation.

"He said that Brother Larry had done it to him at Maryvale — him and other children," his mother recalled years later.

The man he named was Lawrence Sandstrom, a brother of the Holy Cross religious order and the subject of molestation allegations in Los Angeles stretching back to the 1960s. Over the years, claims against Sandstrom have cost the Catholic Church more than \$3 million in civil settlements. But unlike in the L.A. Archdiocese, which released 12,000 pages of internal records on abusive priests in January, there has yet to be a full accounting of the church's handling of Sandstrom.

That will change this summer when the Holy

[See Sandstrom, A16]

## Claims dogged cleric who worked at orphanage

[Sandstrom, from A1]

Cross brothers and a host of other Catholic orders make public the personnel files of as many as 139 priests, brothers and nuns accused of abusing children in the Los Angeles area.

Although the failings of the archdiocese in dealing with abuse have been well documented, the response of independent religious orders, which minister around the world, is less known. Orders such as the Jesuits, Salesians and Carmelites had more clergy working in the region than the archdiocese itself when some of the worst molestation occurred. Oversight of those priests rested not with the archbishop but with the superiors of some 50 far-flung orders headquartered across the country.

Among those whose files will be made public are a Priest father who was prosecuted in both Los Angeles and Texas for sexual assault of teenagers and a Dominican priest who fled to his native Philippines after another priest discovered a 17-year-old in his bed.

### Contradictions

The contents of Sandstrom's confidential file hold particular interest because what is known publicly about his case is conflicting. The young and psychologically troubled children at the orphanage in 1983 made for less than reliable witnesses, and authorities were divided about the validity of their claims.

Prosecutors said they didn't have enough evidence to file criminal charges against Sandstrom, but a judge overseeing foster children found that he had sodomized 4-year-olds. Sandstrom insisted on his innocence, and his superiors in the order and at the orphanage backed him up, writing glowing letters of recommendation to help him get teaching jobs at Catholic

high schools.

A lawyer for the Holy Cross brothers said the order's file on Sandstrom runs hundreds of pages and could become public as early as this month. Sandstrom, 73, resigned from the order in 1997 for reasons the order said were unrelated to abuse allegations. He now sells kitchen countertops in New Orleans and did not return messages seeking comment.

Chief among the long-unanswered questions is what the order knew about Sandstrom when it sent him to be executive director of Maryvale, an orphanage for especially vulnerable children run by an order of nuns.

Elizabeth Gori, who became the guardian of a second boy allegedly molested by Sandstrom, said she hoped the files might "uncover all this stuff the church has been hiding for all those years."

"I only had bits and pieces at the time, and I was trying to focus on what would help" the boy, she said.

Court filings, archdiocese records and interviews provide a partial picture of Sandstrom's troubles in Los Angeles. The boy whom Gori cared for was one of several Maryvale children who returned from an outing with Sandstrom in the San Bernardino Mountains displaying behavior one orphanage social worker described as "unusually sexual."

"They kept referring to a secret," social worker Mary Jane Landrock wrote at the time. She called a child abuse hotline. In interviews with detectives, one boy described in detail how "Brother Larry" sodomized him, but the other children's statements were less clear.

"One of the children only talks in riddles & another is called a liar by the other children," a prosecutor wrote of the boy later cared for by Gori and a girl who went on the

[See Sandstrom, A17]

[Sandstrom, from A16] outing. Two boys ultimately accused Sandstrom of molesting them.

Sandstrom denied harming the children but declined to be interviewed by investigators or take a polygraph test. Ultimately sheriff's detectives and county social services workers said they could not substantiate the claims. When Landrock kept voicing her suspicions, Sandstrom fired her. The orphanage later paid her \$25,000 as part of a settlement in which she agreed never to disparage Maryvale employees.

In the weeks after the allegations surfaced, the boy who talked in riddles was moved to another group home where his sexual acting out again drew attention and led a judge to convene a hearing. After listening to testimony from Landrock and others — but not from Sandstrom — the judge ruled that he had sexually abused the children and banished him from Maryvale.

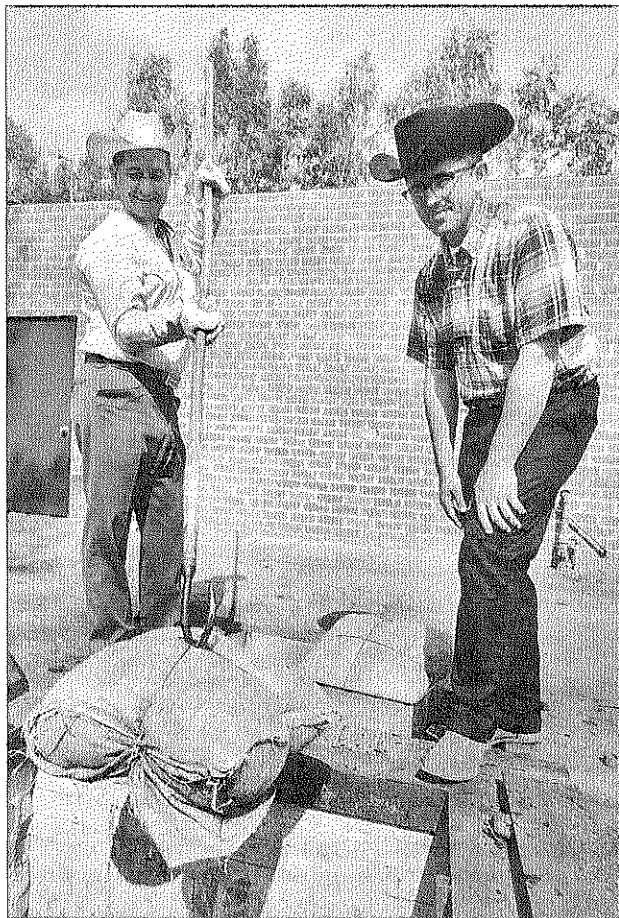
Sandstrom left but maintained his innocence, hiring a lawyer to challenge the judge's order. A different judge tossed out parts of the previous judge's order, including the finding that Sandstrom had abused children. With recommendation letters from the orphanage, he went on to work at La Salle High School in Pasadena and other Catholic schools in Hayward, Calif., and New Orleans.

### Troubled boys

Meanwhile, the two boys he was accused of abusing struggled. Gori decided against adopting the boy she'd cared for because his 12-hour tantrums were too much for her.

"There was so much anger, and he was too little to explain," she recalled. He was admitted to a state psychiatric hospital, where he remained until he turned 18.

The other boy, the one who detailed being sodomized by Sandstrom, was adopted by a young, devoutly Catholic couple from the San Gabriel Valley. In a lawsuit filed in 1994, the couple said they were never informed of the suspected molestation. They said they learned of the allegations only after their adopted son abused both of their biologi-



Los Angeles Times

**LAWRENCE SANDSTROM**, shown at right in 1967, was the subject of abuse allegations dating to the '60s.

cal children.

### 'A living hell'

"It was a living hell," the mother recalled in a deposition. "There was no joy, no laughter in the household."

The boy in the psychiatric hospital joined their lawsuit against the order and Maryvale. In the litigation, it emerged that officials at Maryvale were aware of rumors that Sandstrom may have abused children before he was hired. His order, however, denied the rumors and said the first and only accusation was at Maryvale and that it was false.

The orphanage settled the claims with both boys in 1996, reaching an undisclosed financial agreement with the San Gabriel Valley family and paying the other nearly \$100,000. Despite the payouts, the order never wavered in its defense of Sandstrom. When the San Gabriel Valley mother wrote a letter expressing worry that Sandstrom might harm other children, a Holy Cross leader responded by offering "as much assurance as life affords" that he posed no

danger.

"Neither before nor since he held his position at Maryvale has there been any reason to suspect sexual misconduct," Brother Donald Blauvelt wrote.

In 2003, however, a man named Rick stepped forward with an account that raised questions about Blauvelt's assertion. In a lawsuit, Adair said Sandstrom had engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct with juvenile delinquents at Rancho San Antonio, a Holy Cross-run group home in Chatsworth, in the late 1960s. The headmaster, a Holy Cross brother, was told of Sandstrom's alleged behavior at the time, he claimed.

Adair and another man said Sandstrom made them and other boys strip naked for group therapy. The second man said Sandstrom sometimes masturbated in the back of the room. Adair recalled this week that when one boy complained that Sandstrom had forced him to perform a naked massage, the headmaster called a meeting and "told us in no

uncertain terms that we would not discuss [the boy's] accusations with anyone."

Adair said that in 1993, he phoned the order's Texas headquarters and told Blauvelt, the top official there, of Sandstrom's alleged misconduct. He said Blauvelt didn't seem surprised and simply asked how much money he wanted. Adair said \$50,000; Blauvelt offered to get on a plane to personally deliver a check, he said.

Ultimately, Adair backed out. An attorney for the Holy Cross brothers disputed that account this week, saying the order never promised Adair compensation, let alone a hand-delivered check.

Over the next decade and a half, the legal landscape changed dramatically, with thousands suing the church across the country. By 2007, the payouts were averaging in the seven figures. Although neither of the Rancho San Antonio students alleged that Sandstrom ever touched them, both received \$1.5 million as part of a 2007 settlement. That agreement also provided for the upcoming release of clergy personnel files.

### Tough adjustments

The boy who spent most of his childhood in a psychiatric hospital has had a rocky adulthood, with a string of criminal convictions and stints behind bars. Now 35, he said he couldn't talk about Sandstrom because of a confidentiality clause in his settlement. He became a father last year and recently reconnected with Gori, his onetime guardian.

"He said, 'There wasn't anything else you could have done.' I was so grateful for that," Gori said.

The San Gabriel Valley family also said they were barred from speaking by the terms of their settlement. The family spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on treatment for their children, according to court documents. Their adopted son, 35, is now married with children, owns his own business and boasts on its website of his supportive and loving family.

victoria.kim@latimes.com  
harriet.ryan@latimes.com

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

# Costs may increase to improve jails

By Christina Villacorte

christina.villacorte@  
dailynews.com

@LADNVillacorte on Twitter

Los Angeles County taxpayers may need to reach deep into their pockets to implement far-reaching recommendations to improve the jail system, which includes building a new treatment facility for mentally disabled inmates downtown.

An independent consultant who analyzed the Sheriff's Department's "jail plan" this past week laid out four options for replacing and/or upgrading certain lockups, and the cost ranged from \$1.37 billion to \$1.62 billion.

Meanwhile, the county's budget manager told the Board of Supervisors that the cost of implementing key recommendations of a blue ribbon panel to keep deputies from using excessive force on inmates has risen from \$60.9 million to \$88.5 million — a 45 percent increase.

Despite the price tag expected to increase as additional reforms are factored in, Sheriff Lee Baca's spokesman Steve Whitmore said the county hopes to save money in the long run.

Whitmore said following the advice of the Commission on Jail Violence to create an Office of Inspector General, boost staffing, improve training and install body scanners and additional cameras would reduce the risk of the county being slapped with expensive lawsuits over inmate beatings.

"With the changes implemented by the sheriff beginning in October 2011, coupled with recommendations by the CCJV, it is the department's expectation that there will be a increased level of oversight by the sheriff, which will relate to a reduction of lawsuits and employee misconduct," Whitmore said.

In its analysis of the department's jail plan, Vanir Construction Management

said there was a "critical need" to close and demolish the half-century old Men's Central Jail, and provide appropriate facilities to treat the growing mentally ill inmate population, most of whom are currently housed at the Twin Towers Correctional Facility.

"The electrical, mechanical and plumbing systems have surpassed a reasonably-expected, 30-year life span and are costly and difficult to maintain," the consultant said of Men's Central Jail.

"Overall, there is a clear and significant deficiency in the number of appropriately designed medical and mental health beds and program/support space."

The consultant's recommendation was to build a Consolidated Correctional Treatment Facility downtown with mental health crisis beds and intensive care, as well as a substance abuse disorder treatment program, similar to a proposal by Su-

pervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.

It also examined creating a Women's Village at Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic for low-risk female inmates.

The least expensive option is to build the treatment facility and renovate the existing Mira Loma county jail to house female inmates. The most expensive option is to build the treatment facility and women's village, and modernize Mira Loma.

The county also has to contend with the still-increasing price tag for carrying out the recommendations of the Commission on Jail Violence.

Baca has proposed adding about \$28 million to the cost to expand the closed circuit television camera system in the jails.

If approved, it would replace the high-tech lapel cameras originally proposed by the commission, which are even more expensive. Those would have been attached to deputies' uniforms.



We cannot guarantee when this offer will be repeated in the newspaper.  
Clip this offer and please call today!

# FINDINGS ADD TO WOES FOR SHERIFF

Thur 7-4-13  
LA Times  
Wide-ranging probes  
portray a department  
sharply at odds with  
Baca's vision.

BY JACK LEONARD AND  
ROBERT FATURECHI

The conclusions were sweeping and damning: Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies used excessive force. They were poorly supervised. Problem cops weren't disciplined.

Those were the findings of a county commission that last year examined allegations of deputy abuse in the jails. And they are also among the conclusions of a new U.S. Justice Department report alleging civil rights abuses in the Antelope Valley.

The two outside investigations together portray a troubled department sharply at odds with the vision Sheriff Lee Baca has preached during his 15 years as head of the nation's largest sheriff's department.

Baca often speaks of his department's "core values" that call on deputies to perform their "duties with respect for the dignity of all people" and the "courage to stand against racism ... and bigotry in all its forms." But for some, the Justice Department's findings show again that Baca's values are not embraced by his entire agency.

Veteran civil rights attorney Connie Rice, long a backer of Baca, said it's crucial that the sheriff move quickly to fix the problems. She said he needs to determine whether managers at the Antelope Valley stations are part of the problem.

"His vision isn't what's in charge out there," Rice said.

[See Sheriff, A16]

## Findings sharply at odds with Baca's vision

[Sheriff, from A1]

For Baca, the findings are a blow to his reputation as a progressive lawman who champions civil rights and community policing.

In response to the jail problems, Baca instituted reforms that earned him praise from some of his fiercest critics. Now, his office is negotiating with the Justice Department on a reform plan for his Antelope Valley operation.

The sheriff declined requests for interviews, but the county has disputed the Justice Department's findings. One sheriff's official, who asked for anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media, said Baca felt betrayed by federal authorities for issuing such a harsh report after praising the agency for months on reforms it was making.

The Justice Department did credit the sheriff's Antelope Valley stations with taking steps to address the concerns in its report released last week. A spokeswoman for the federal agency said this week, however, that Justice Department officials "would not hesitate to enter into contested litigation" if negotiations with the county and the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale fail to reach an

agreement.

As part of the negotiations, federal authorities are seeking \$12.5 million for people whose civil rights were allegedly violated by deputies and others.

Earlier this week, Baca released a statement saying he was cooperating with the federal government to reach a settlement but called on the Justice Department to share materials from its investigation, including a statistical report that it says shows blacks and Latinos were more likely than whites to be stopped or searched by deputies.

"The Sheriff's Department does not condone racial profiling," he said.

The allegation of racially biased policing was the main area in which the Antelope Valley findings went beyond those unearthed during the jail abuse scandal. None of the jail violence commission's findings suggested that minorities were specifically targeted for abuse.

But other aspects of the new report's conclusions echo the problems found in the jails.

Both investigations identified excessive force as a serious concern. The county commission found "a persistent pattern of unreason-

able force" in the jails. Federal authorities singled out the prevalent use of force in the Antelope Valley against people who were handcuffed, some of whom were punched in the face.

The two inquiries also found that deputies who committed misconduct or violated department policies rarely faced discipline. The jail violence commis-

'As deputies leave the jail, those same problems and disturbing culture can infiltrate the entire department.'

— MIRIAM KRINSKY,  
executive director, L.A. County jail violence commission

sion cited lapses in reporting, investigating and disciplining deputies who used unreasonable force against inmates. In the northern county patrol stations, federal investigators found that the Sheriff's Department failed to "properly consider and resolve complaints from community members."

Of 180 misconduct complaints filed in one 12-month period in Lancaster and Palmdale, all but one were dealt with informally by station supervisors rather than

the department's specialized internal investigations unit. That meant the deputies wouldn't face serious discipline, the federal government said.

In one case, no formal discipline was imposed on a Lancaster deputy who punched a handcuffed woman in the jaw who was yelling and jerking around while three deputies held her

down, according to the Justice Department. In another, someone filed a complaint claiming a deputy accused him of talking in "African-American mumbo jumbo" but a supervisor did not think it should be sent to the department's internal investigations unit because a video showed a slightly different phrase used by the deputy: "African-American double talk."

The two independent investigations cited failures to identify deputies with re-

peated complaints so that the department could intervene. While the jail violence commission complained that force policies were confusing, federal investigators noted an "aggressive tone" in a department guide on using force against someone spitting at deputies. The guide said: "Remember that the word 'force' is part of the very title of our profession: Law Enforcement."

Robert Bonner, a member of the jail violence commission and the former head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, said he was surprised that the federal investigation reached conclusions similar to his panel's. Bonner said his impression had been that the jails' woes festered because Sheriff's Department brass were more focused on patrol and that the "jail side of the house was the poor stepchild."

But the commission's executive director, Miriam Krinsky, noted that the jails are where rookie deputies usually spend their first years on the job. Problems that take hold there, she said, can influence impressionable young deputies who then go out on patrol.

"As deputies leave the jail, those same problems

and disturbing culture can infiltrate the entire department," Krinsky said.

Though negotiations are continuing, the Sheriff's Department has already promised federal authorities that it will revise policies on force and discipline and improve supervision of deputies, including regular analyses to ensure that they are not engaging in racial profiling.

Richard Drooyan, the jail violence commission's general counsel, said Baca's willingness to embrace the panel's recommendations has helped reduce violence in the jails, and have set him up to deal with the issues in the Antelope Valley.

The sheriff revamped his upper management so that assistant sheriffs who oversee the jails, patrol areas and other sections now report to him directly, rather than through an intermediary, as they had previously done.

"He's in a much better position now to solve the problems identified by the Department of Justice," Drooyan said.

jack.leonard@latimes.com  
robert.faturechi@latimes.com  
Times staff writer Abby Sewell contributed to this report.